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Front Edit Other  
Page Page Page

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## Freedom and Watchdog Groups

INCREASINGLY of late one is haunted by the grotesque image of the American as a flabby success who retreats from the realities of our time into a plastic-and-chronic push-button world, turns on the TV or Hi-Fi, and says testily, "Let George do it" (or Rep. Walter, Sen. Eastland, Mr. Welch, the DAR, etc.)

Apparently afraid to look one new idea in the face, he is only too happy to dump his vaunted freedom in the lap of a committee and wash his hands of any injustices, slanders, or invasions of individual liberties thereby committed in the name of "security."

Even when we see signs of excessive manipulation of the public mind or misuse of the public trust by these watchdog groups, we allow it to go relatively unchallenged.

We know that Mr. Walter's committee actually foisted off a tampered-up film on the public to arouse its fears and justify its own activities; yet we

still insist this is a necessary "democratic" institution.

We know that the CIA has overstepped its legitimate intelligence functions; yet we label as disloyal all those who object to its role in the Cuban invasion and elsewhere.

We know that the John Birch Society is an essentially anti-democratic, strong, quasi-totalitarian group which endorses strict obedience to the leaders; yet we believe in seeing in it an attempt at Communist infiltration.

I sincerely hope that I have misread the situation; nevertheless, the signs are disturbing. I wonder if we could not be better able to thrive as a society if we re-allocated ourselves to these subtle threats posed by the autocratic right and once again stood up as free men for the traditional American privilege to dissent.

Denver. JOHN BERNARD

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